COLONY OF SEYCHELLES

ABBREVIATED
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
EPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOR THE YEAR
1942

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SEYCHELLES.

Report of the Department of Agriculture for the year ended 31st December, 1942.

For the fourth year, this report is presented in an abridged form, in compliance with instructions received from the Colonial Office.

SECTION I. AGRICULTURE IN THE COLONY.

Meteorology.

Weather. The total rainfall recorded at the Port Office was 63.32 inches, compared with 97.70 inches, the average for the past 20 years. There was a good rainfall in the months of January and December and a moderate one in the months of February and March. The rainfall of the remaining 8 months was poor. The rainfall was unevenly distributed and in many districts it was much below that registered at the Port Office.

This year has been the driest since 1922 and in several districts it was difficult to obtain water for animals and distilleries.

Agricultural Industries.

1. Coconuts. The quantity of copra exported during the year was 4,963 tons having a value of Rs. 839,579. These figures compare with 3,929 tons valued at Rs. 448,020 in 1941. The year's copra production was purchased by the Ministry of Food.

The local selling price of copra increased from Rs. 136 per ton in January to Rs. 195 per ton at the end of the year. The average selling price was approximately Rs. 171 per ton.

Drought caused the death of many coconut palms which were growing in thin layers of soil and also a considerable diminution in the size of nuts. Scale insects continue to be effectively controlled by predators.

2. Essential Oils. The following table gives the quantities and values of essential oils exported during 1942 :—

	Quantity.		Value.	
Cinnamon leaf oil	Kgs.	57,204	Rs.	302,399
Patchouli oil	„	2,979	„	91,960
Cinnamon bark oil	„	162	„	10,228
Eucalyptus staigeriana oil	„	61	„	1,199

Cinnamon Industry. The quantity of cinnamon leaf oil exported during the year was about 16 tons below the average for the previous five years and it was the lowest since 1935. The reduced production was due to shortage of labour in some districts and to an inadequate water supply in others.

The local price of oil was Rs. 4.90 per kilo. in the month of January and this increased to Rs. 5.40 in July; the latter price was maintained for the remainder of the year.

The Colony's production of oil was sold in the United States of America where the demand was steady.

Some cinnamon bark oil was produced from scraped bark at the Central Distillery and 162 kilos. were sold in the United Kingdom at Shs. 80/- per lb.

There was a steady demand for cinnamon bark in the United Kingdom and 534 tons valued at Rs. 91,292 were exported.

Patchouli Oil. Imports into the United Kingdom were restricted during the year and the local selling price which was about Rs. 30 per kilo. during the first half of the year declined to Rs. 17 per kilo. in December.

The drought caused a considerable reduction in the area under this crop and in spite of the increased area recorded in last year's report there was only a small increase in the production of oil.

Central Distillery. The following table gives the quantities of material distilled and the number of hours that the still worked during the year :—

Material.	Quantity.		No. of hours.
Patchouli	Tons	26.0	2,577
Eucalyptus staigeriana	„	1.4	30
Cinnamon leaves	„	139.6	2,489
Cinnamon bark	„	3.5	95

3. *Vanilla.* The local price of vanilla fluctuated between 8 and Rs. 16 per kilo. 571 kilos. of vanilla, having a value Rs. 36,114 were exported during the year, compared with kilos., having a value of Rs. 7,872, exported in 1941.

Dry weather encouraged the production of a large nber of flowers, but a lack of rain at the end of the year erely weakened the plants so that the beans for next year's p will be smaller than usual. In the islands of La Digue Praslin large numbers of vanilla plants succumbed during drought.

4. *Food production.* Dry weather seriously handicapped cultivation of food crops and in many districts crops ed entirely. However, in districts where the weather was re favourable satisfactory yields of cassava, sweet potatoes l bananas were obtained. The area planted in food crops Government estates was further increased by about 29 es.

The Department has shown that sweet potatoes, particuy the "Cambar" variety, give excellent yields in the sandy teaux which have received applications of ash and guano. e soils of the Colony are generally deficient in organic mat, hence the use of mulch and cover crops are indispensable ny system of intensive cultivation. The cover crops that re given the best results locally are Bengal bean *ucuna aterrimum*), Pueraria phaseoloides, Crotolaria anagydes and Boeme (*Phaseolus spp.*) The last mentioned grows ll in sandy plateaux and in the South East monsoon also oduces a good crop of beans.

Methods which have been adopted on Government estates combat soil erosion on hillsides have given excellent results l in conjunction with improved methods of cultivation it has n shown that a succession of crops can be grown without rogressive diminution in yields.

Yams of the imported Lisbon variety gave good yields and ut eight acres of this crop were planted on Government es-es at the end of the year. Also 3,932 rooted cuttings were plied free of charge to planters. It has been found that the t method of propagating yams is to place the cuttings in ist coconut husk fibre until the "eyes" develop and then nsplant them to the field. This crop is well suited to local ditions and it gives good yields if the land is well manured l it receives an adequate supply of water during the first r or five months of growth.

Good results were obtained with cabbage growing on Go-nment estates and about six tons of this vegetable were sold,

The marsh at La Digue which has an area of about acres was surveyed and Government undertook to establis lets to the sea and to make the main drains. The worl greatly facilitated by the drought. This area contains soil and it is hoped that the owners of the land will grow crops on a large scale.

The Department opened a stall at the Victoria Mark facilitate the sale of produce from Government estates.

SECTION II. WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT

1. Estates under departmental control. The Depart continued the management of the Grand'Anse estates a report on the working of the estates with the balance will be published in the Government Gazette.

2. Reafforestation. The clearing of Gleichenia fer Crown Lands was continued and this was followed by the ting of quick growing forest trees. A small quantity of mon was also cropped in these areas.

The trees which have recently been planted on Midl Crown Lands at Praslin made satisfactory growth in spi unfavourable weather. A large number of coco de mer were planted in the reserves at Praslin.

3. Botanical and Town gardens and experimental The Gardens and experimental plots were maintained in order and some improvements were made in Government H grounds.

4. Livestock. The Department now has a herd of a 40 cattle and a large proportion of these are crosses with Indian Scindh breed. These crosses are hardy and th better than the European breeds under the semi-ranching ditions which obtain locally. Bulls of the Freisian, Jersey Scindh breeds were available for service.

The number of pigs raised at Anse Boileau was increa Several pigs were slaughtered and there was a good dem for weaners.

The Department maintains a small flock of Rhode Isl Red fowls and eggs and cocks for breeding purposes v distributed.

The Jumnapari goats which were imported from I last year, were brought to Mahé in July after they had sp a quarantine period of six months at Long Island. S difficulty was experienced at first in getting the imported g accustomed to local foods, but the seven young goats wh were born during the year have become acclimatised and growing well.

5. *Laboratory and distillation investigations.* Thirty seven samples of essential oils were analysed before exportation and 172 samples of fermentations were analysed for the Excise Department. Experimental distillations were carried out on rum for local consumption.

6. *Agricultural instruction.* Officers made frequent visits to estates, especially in connection with the growing of food-crops. Training in estate management was given to one pupil.

7. *Fisheries and Guano.* Salt fish for local consumption was produced but there was no export of fishery products. 22,064 tons of guano were exported.

SECTION III.

OMITTED.

SECTION IV. SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION AFFECTING AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES.

Ordinance No. 3 of 1942 amends and consolidates the Law relating to the Fisheries of the Colony.

Ordinance No. 8 of 1942 amends and consolidates the Law relating to the manufacture and export of copra.

A. F. NICHOLS,
Director.

Department of Agriculture,
Seychelles, 7th August, 1943.